

What to Do for Colds and Flu



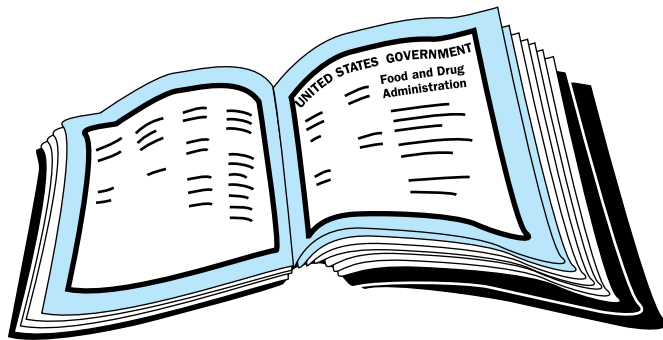
Department of Health and Human Services
Food and Drug Administration
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FDA U.S. Food and Drug Administration

Do You Have Other Questions About Colds and Flu?

FDA may have an office near you. Look for their number in the blue pages of the phone book.



You can also contact FDA through its toll-free number, 1-888-INFO-FDA (1-888-463-6332). Or, on the World Wide Web at www.fda.gov.

Is It a Cold or the Flu? For Your Safety, Know the Difference

A cold and the flu (also called influenza) are alike in many ways. But the flu can sometimes lead to more serious problems, like the lung disease pneumonia.

A stuffy nose, sore throat, and sneezing are usually signs of a cold.

Tiredness, fever, headache, and major aches and pains probably mean you have the flu.

Coughing can be a sign of either a cold or the flu. But a bad cough usually points to the flu.



Choose the Right Medicines For Your Symptoms

Make sure the label states that it treats your symptoms.

If You Want to Do This:	Choose Medicine With This:
Unclog a stuffy nose	Nasal decongestant
Quiet a cough	Cough suppressant
Loosen mucus so you can cough it up	Expectorant
Stop runny nose and sneezing	Antihistamine
Ease fever, headaches, minor aches and pains	Pain Reliever (Analgesic)

Try to Avoid Getting a Cold



- Wash your hands often. You can pick up cold germs easily, even when shaking someone's hand or touching doorknobs or handrails.
 - Avoid people with colds when possible.
 - If you sneeze or cough, do it into a tissue and then throw the tissue away.
 - Clean surfaces you touch with a germ-killing disinfectant.
- Don't touch your nose, eyes or mouth. Germs can enter your body easily by these paths.



But, Do Not Take Antibiotics For a Cold or Flu

Antibiotics won't work against cold and flu germs.

And, **antibiotics** should be taken only when really needed.

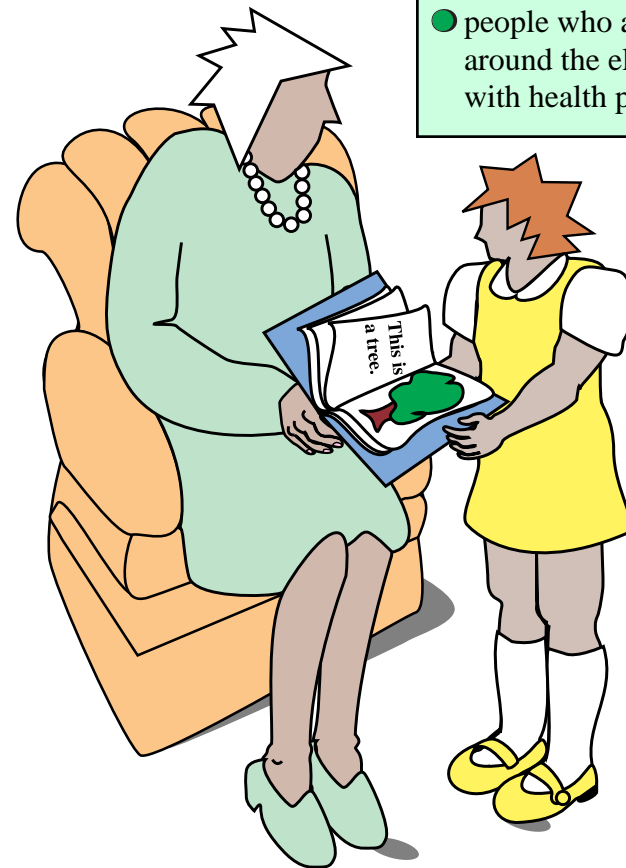


Who Should Get a Flu Shot?

Almost all people who want to lower their chance of coming down with the flu can get a flu shot.

Flu shots are most important for:

- people 65 or older
- nursing home patients
- people over 6 months old with health problems, like asthma, or with long-term diseases, like HIV or heart disease
- children or teenagers who must often take aspirin
- people who are often around the elderly or those with health problems



The Food and Drug Administration, or
FDA, is part of the U.S. government.
FDA makes sure medicines for illnesses
like colds and flu work and are safe.

Know When to Call Your Doctor

You usually do not have to call your doctor right away if you have signs of a cold or flu. But you should call your doctor in these situations:

- Your symptoms get worse.
- Your symptoms last a long time.

- After feeling a little better, you develop signs of a more serious problem. Some of these signs are a sick-to-your-stomach feeling, vomiting, high fever, shaking chills, chest pain, or coughing with thick, yellow-green mucus.



Protect Your Children From “Salicylates” In Cold Medicines

Do **not** give aspirin or other “salicylates” to children or teenagers with symptoms of a cold or flu.

If you aren’t sure whether a product has salicylates, ask your doctor or pharmacist.

Young people can get sick or die from a rare condition called Reye syndrome if they take these medicines while they have these symptoms.



Try to Avoid Getting The Flu

A flu shot can greatly lower your chance of getting the flu. The best time to get the shot is from the middle of October to the middle of November, because most people get the flu in the winter.

The shot can't cause the flu. But you may feel sore or weak or have a fever for a couple of days.



Help Yourself Feel Better While You Are Sick

A cold usually lasts only a couple of days to a week. Tiredness from the flu may continue for several weeks.

To feel better while you are sick:

- Drink plenty of fluids.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Use a humidifier — an electric device that puts water into the air.
- A cough and cold medicine you buy without a prescription may help.

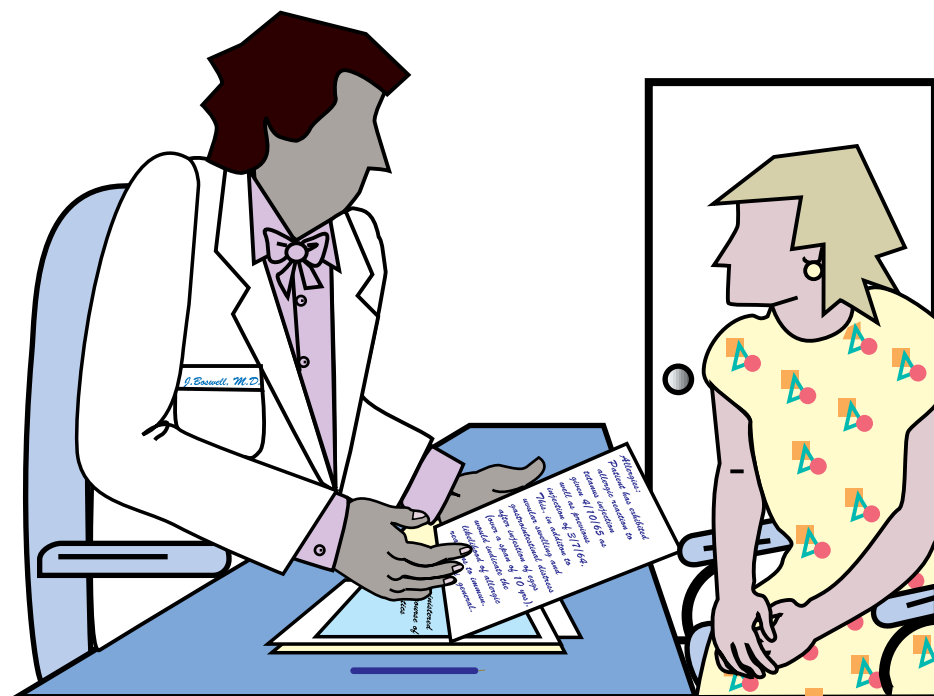


Who Might Not Be Able to Get a Flu Shot?

Some people should talk to their doctor first.

Talk to your doctor **before** you get the shot if you:

- have certain allergies, especially to eggs
- have an illness, like pneumonia
- have a high fever
- are pregnant



Prescription Medicine Can Prevent Flu, Too

If you are one of those who should not get the flu shot, ask your doctor about prescription medicine to help prevent flu.

And if you get the flu, taking this medicine within the first 48 hours can make your illness less serious.

